

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4-9 and 11 are pending in this application.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 4, 5, 7-9 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,811,737 to Fukuta et al. ("Fukuta") in view of JP 09-085481 to Onodera et al. ("Onodera") and JP 2002-126421 to Yamamura; and rejects claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Fukuta in view of Onodera and Yamamura and further in view of JP 01-233083 to Kanehara. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The applied references, either alone or in combination, would not have rendered obvious "a tape bonder that bonds a tape onto an end surface of the honeycomb structural body; a laser oscillator that oscillates a laser so as to perform cutting processing of the tape bonded onto the end surface of the honeycomb structural body to obtain the honeycomb structural body wherein the tape having a predetermined size along an outer peripheral shape is bonded on the end surface...an image pick-up unit that picks up an image of the end surface of the honeycomb structural body reflected by the mirror..wherein the tape bonder includes a winding element for winding a residual portion of the tape that is created after the tape is cut by the laser oscillator," recited in claim 1.

The Office Action acknowledges that Fukuta fails to explicitly disclose a tape bonder but asserts that the device of Fukuta "intrinsically" includes a tape bonder. The dictionary definition of intrinsic, "of or relating to the essential nature of a thing," does not appear to make sense in the context of the rejection.

Instead, Applicants interpret the Office Action's comment as asserting that Fukuda inherently includes a tape bonder. In the context of §102 and §103, an apparatus inherently includes a feature if that feature is not disclosed and must be present each and every time. Applicants assert that the apparatus of Fukuta does not necessarily include a tape bonder that adheres an uncut tape.

In contrast, claim 1 implicitly recites a tape bonder that adheres an uncut tape. In particular, claim 1 recites "a laser oscillator that oscillates a laser so as to perform cutting processing of the tape bonded onto the end surface of the honeycomb structural body." Because the laser oscillator of claim 1 cuts a tape that has already been bonded onto the end surface of the honeycomb structural body, and the tape bonder bonds the tape onto the end surface of the honeycomb structural body, the tape must be uncut when the tape bonder bonds the tape onto the end surface of the honeycomb structural body.

In addition, Applicants note that Fukuta fails to disclose how the sheet 4 is adhered to an end face of the honeycomb body 1. Instead, Fukuta merely discloses a sheet 4 having a size that is substantially the same as that of the end face of the ceramic honeycomb formed body 1 (see Fukuta, col. 3, lines 41-44).

Applicants submit that there is no evidence capable of supporting an assertion of the implicit use of a film bonder that adheres a continuous uncut sheet onto an end face of a ceramic formed body and that Onodera and Yamamura fail to remedy the deficiency of Fukuta. In particular, Onodera is applied to teach a laser machining head and fails to disclose a tape bonding device that adheres an uncut tape to a honeycomb structural body.

Regarding Yamamura, Yamamura discloses an adhesion sheet (after cutting) that is adhered on both end sides by a mechanical arm or by hand but is silent regarding employing the mechanical arm to adhere an uncut sheet (see Yamamura, paragraph [0044]). Accordingly, Applicants assert that one of ordinary skill in the art would understand Yamamura as teaching at most, employing a mechanical bonder and would not understand Yamamura as teaching employing a mechanical bonder that adheres an uncut film to both end sides.

In addition, Applicants disagree with the Office Action's assertion that the sheet stripping section 24 of Yamamura corresponds to the winding element of claim 1. In

particular, the sheet stripping section 24 of Yamamura collects the adhered portion of an adhesion sheet by means of an adhesion force that is greater than the adhesion force between the end of the honeycomb structure and the adhesion sheet (see Yamamura, paragraphs [0068] and [0075]). Thus, the sheet stripping section 24 of Yamamura does not facilitate the adhesion of a sheet onto the honeycomb structure but instead removes the sheet from the honeycomb structure. Accordingly, one of ordinary skill would not include the sheet stripping section 24 of Yamamura in a tape bonder. In contrast, the winding element of claim 1 is included in the claimed tape bonder.

Thus, Fukuta and Yamamura wouldn't have rendered obvious a device that includes a tape bonder that adheres an uncut film on the end of a honeycomb structure, taking an image of an end face to which the uncut film is adhered and then cutting the adhered film via a laser.

Dependent claims 4-9 and 11 depend from independent claim 1. Therefore, the dependent claims are patentable at least for their dependence from claim 1, as well as for the additional features those claims recite.

Withdrawal of the rejections is requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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